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THE
Present State
OF THE
CHURCH of *Scotland*,
WITH
The DUTY of the Members
thereof enquired into,
IN A
SERMON

At the Opening of
The SYNOD of *Perth and Stirling*,
October 9th 1733

By Mr. HENRY LINDSAY Minister of the Gospel at
BOTHKENNAR.

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THE

BRITISH MUSEUM

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND



IN A

GERMAN

Language of

The Church of England and Wales

and the City of London

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P R E F A C E.

THIS Sermon ventures abroad without any Imbellishment to recommend it to the polite Taste of this Age. It hath no Quotations from antient or modern Books, to swell its Margin, or make the World believe the Author has his Share of Reading: It is not set off to the Advantage, with fluent Expressions, or handsom Periods, to engage the refin'd Wits of this Age to give it their Applause. This is what the Author does not pretend to; but endeavours to speak to you in that Language which is natural to him, and which he hopes will be understood by every serious Reader, which is all he aims at, and all the Use he studies in Expressions.

The Subject itself is of great Concern in our present Circumstances, and I hope will be laid to Heart by all the Welwishers of our

PREFACE.

Zion. Now is the Time to bestir ourselves, while we have any Privilege or Liberty remaining worth the contending for. While Incroachments are daily made, and our Breaches are widening, if there be none to stand in the Gap, we may see our Church ruined, when it will be too late to lend an helping Hand.

In what I have represented as the State of Religion among us at this Day, my Design is far from exposing the Nakedness of our Mother-Church. I have endeavoured to represent the same in Words, I hope, will be irritating to none. I have used all dutiful Respect to the Authority of this Church: I have used no harsh Expressions concerning any Sett of Men; nor have I mentioned any Thing as wrong among us, but what is too well known, and universally talked of, before this does come abroad in the World.

As to the Directions, which I reckon point out the Duty of all that wish well to our Zion at this Day, you see I have taken the Plan from a noble and approved Pattern. And, without doubt, these Things are left on Record, not merely as a Piece of History, to inform us what was done in former Periods; but for our Example and Instruction, to encourage and direct the Lord's People in After-ages, to follow these Methods which
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P R E F A C E.

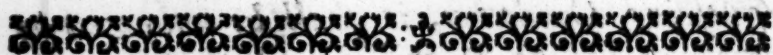
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he himself did approve of, and crowned with Success.

I honour our Church, and desire daily to be found among that Number who pray for the Peace of Jerusalem. There are many worthy Ministers and Christians in the same, whom I honour, love and esteem with all my Heart; and desire to entertain Christian Charity for others, whom, in several Things, especially in our late publick Managements, I differ from. I have not the Vanity to imagine any Thing I have said here, will reach Conviction to all of a different Sentiment from me; yet I hope what I have advanced is so agreeable to the Scriptural Rule, and approved Pattern, that, without regarding the Author, it deserves the serious Consideration of every Member of this Church. And wherein they do, or shall propose any Thing, that may more tend to the Good and Welfare of our Jerusalem in her present languishing Condition, it shall be embraced by me, as I hope it will by all that love the Prosperity of Zion, with Thankfulness, and cheerful Endeavours to fall in with it.

Mean Time, as this Essay and Sermon comes abroad just as it was delivered before my Reverend and indeared Fathers and Brethren, I do in the most earnest Manner intreat and beseech, not only them, but all Ministers, Elders, and other Christians of a publick Spirit

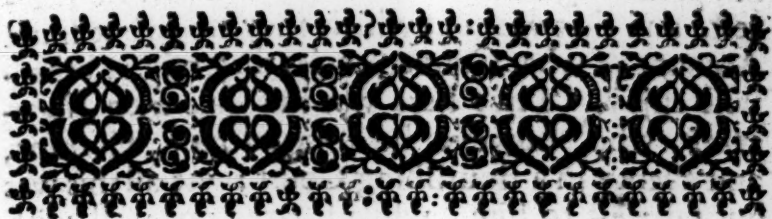
Spirit in our Land, that they would seriously lay to Heart, what is here suggested as proper for us severally in our Stations, that we may not be only Onlookers, or Spectators, while we see our Mother-Church rending to Pieces. Let us all, in Secret before God, be crying mightily to him to have Pity upon Ferusalem, and pour out of his Spirit upon all Ranks and Degrees of Persons among us; which will again make our Zion to flourish, and Prosperity to dwell within her Gates. Let Ministers and Elders exert themselves in their Station to do what is incumbent on them to stop the Breach, and in the most earnest and dutiful Manner plead with our Judicatories, that they would do what in them lies, to remove these Things that are at present the Occasion of our Divisions, that so much marr the Peace of our Ferusalem, and the Success of the Gospel among us.



Courteous Reader,

Some few Escapes as to Spelling, and others as to Pointing have crept in; which, I hope, will not stumble you, as not marring the Sense.

NEHEM



NEHEM. ii. 3.

And said unto the King, Let the King live for ever : Why should not my Countenance be sad, when the City, the Place of my Fathers Sepulchres, lieth waste, and the Gates thereof are consumed with Fire ?



S Religion is the most sacred and valuable Concern of Mankind ; so he who hath no Concern about it, be the Religion he professes right or wrong, hath been justly in all Ages reckon'd to have no Religion at all :

Inasmuch as the Happiness of never-ending Eternity is infinitely above the short and transitory Duration of a present Life ; so far ought every Man to prefer the Interests and Concerns of Religion to the perishing Enjoyments of fading Time, because Religion is that which shews us the Way to true and lasting Happiness for Soul and Body through Time and Eternity. No Wonder then, that good Men in all Ages have shown so great Concern for the State of Religion,

on, preferring the same to their own private Interest, and that without which they made but small Account of what Conveniencies they might otherwise enjoy. Thus here was the Case with *Nehemiah*, who, however he enjoyed Ease, Honour, and Plenty in a flourishing Court; yet all this was but tasteless to him, while it fared not well with *Jerusalem*, the City of the living God, and the Place where his Name did dwell: *Why should not my Countenance be sad, when the City, the Place of my Fathers Sepulchres, lieth waste, and the Gates thereof are consumed with Fire?*

This good and great Man did live under a very melancholly and afflicted State of the Church; he had been, with some others, under the *Babylonish* Captivity, and was Witness to the low State of the Church of God under that Period; was one of them who returned with *Zerubbabel* to *Jerusalem*, *Nehem. vii. 7.* and was one of those whom the Lord honoured, and made instrumental to lay the Foundation of the *second Temple*; that stately, magnificent, and costly Fabric, built by *Solomon*, being intirely demolished, and burnt with Fire by the insulting Armies of the *Chaldeans*. This was no small Relief to the poor *Jews*, to have their Temple rebuilt, however inferior to the former. But, alas! as we find by the History both of this Book, and that of *Ezra*, the poor returning Captives were in very straitning Circumstances, being molested on all Hands by their Enemies, and the Building several Times made to cease intirely.

Upon what Occasion *Nehemiah* had returned to the *Persian* Court, whether sent for by the King, or otherwise, is not related: Yet so it is,

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we find him not only about that Court, but advanced to a very gainful and honourable Office there, namely, the King's *Cup-bearer*. It would divert me from my Design to quote Observations from antient Authors, to shew you how honourable such an Office was reckoned in these Days, especially among these Eastern Nations: It were easy to shew, how that none were admitted to that Honour, but such whom the Prince very much regarded, and in whom he could confide for his Life.

While *Nehemiah* is advanced in the *Persian* Court, some of his Brethren, as we find by the Beginning of this Book, come from *Jerusalem* to the Royal City *Schuspan*, and inform him of the State of *Jerusalem*, and the poor *Jews* there, how that the Work had been made to cease, and that his Brethren were in great Distress, while their City was laid waste, Religion, as to the external Ordinances thereof, almost wholly made to cease, and they in great Reproach through the Insults of the Enemy. This News very sensibly affected the good Man, so that he mourns, and fasts before the Lord, and resolves to make known the State of *Jerusalem* to the King, and plead with him for the poor afflicted *Jews*, the People of God, that there might be granted them Inlargement from their Distress: And, having earnestly besought the *God of Heaven*, who hath the Hearts of all Men, great and small, in his Hand, and can turn them whither he will, that he would grant him Favour in the Presence of this Monarch, he now resolves to wait a fit Opportunity to make his Case known.

But, as this News much affected the good

Man's Heart, so his Concern appeared in his Face, which is soon taken Notice of by the King himself, as appears by the Beginning of this Chapter. And, because none of a sorrowful Countenance were wont to approach the King, nor were such admitted his Presence; the King remarks it, and, as would appear by his Words, reckons there must be somewhat more than ordinary in it: Yea, by some is thought to entertain a Jealousy, lest *Nehemiah* should be concealing in his Breast some malicious or treacherous Design against the King's Life; because Sense of Guilt, or Villany designed to be acted, cannot fail to cast a Damp upon the Countenance of those engaged in it, especially before those against whom they design the Mischief, as is abundantly known in Cases of this Nature: And the King could have no Notion, how one in Health, and in his Court, where all Things abounded, could be sorrowful or cast down in Countenance:

Now, as this, even the remotest Thought of it, had been far from the honest Man's Heart, it makes him afraid lest, the King entertaining such Thoughts of him, he should thereby lose the Opportunity, and the Influence which otherwise he might have with the King, to get his Petition put up, and his Request granted; *Therefore he was sore afraid before the King*; and, no doubt, thought with himself, that he had lost a favourable Opportunity, and would now be obliged to open the Sentiments of his Heart, tho' at a Disadvantage. Yet there is no Help for it, but he must open the present Concern upon his Spirit, which appeared in his Countenance; And this he does in the Words of our
Text,

Text, which he introduces with that Form of Speech very usual in these Courts; and so we find it made Use of by *Daniel* likewise in his Approaches to the King, namely, *Let the King live for ever*: Which we may either look upon as the ordinary Compliment given to Persons in that high Station; or we may here understand it as *Nehemiah* designing thereby to remove from the King even the least Suspicion as if he intended any Harm against his Life or Person: So far from it, would the good Man say, that sincerely, and from my Heart, *I wish the King a long and prosperous Reign*; which is all, I reckon, is intended by that Form of Speech usual among them.

But then, as to the real Cause of his Grief, it is in the following Words, which he delivers in a very elegant Manner, and so as to appeal to the King himself, and the Princes there present, if he had not good Ground to be dejected, and weighted in Spirit; *Why should not my Countenance be sad, while the City, the Place of my Fathers Sepulchres, lieth waste, and the Gates thereof are consumed with Fire?* It were an easy Matter, by Quotations from antient Authors, to shew what Honour and Respect was by these Nations shown to the *Sepulchres* of their Ancestors; they did build stately Monuments for them, and there offered up Sacrifice for them; yea, many of their publick Places of Worship, and these much frequented, were at the *Monuments or Sepulchres of their Ancestors*: This is abundantly known to all these, who are any Way conversant with Antiquity. Now I am far from imagining that *Nehemiah* was tain-

ted with their *Superstition*, or that he reckoned the Place where his Fathers were buried to be more holy than another Place, because they were buried there; he knew better Things, being instructed in the Knowledge of the true God, and Worship of his Appointment: But he speaks to them in that Dialect which they could best understand, and in these *Terms* that would most move the Hearts of the King, Queen, and Princes attending, that so he might make his Way more easy, and his Suit to relish the better with them. Had he spoken to them in plain Language, and told them *bluntly*, as we express it, That he was concerned that the Temple-worship, Rites, and Ordinances appointed by his God, were much at a Stand; This would have been to have exposed himself to the Ridicule and Reproach of the superstitious and idolatrous Worshippers, who valued not the God of *Israel*, and reckoned that Worship paid to him according to his Appointment to be Folly and Superstition at best, as contradicting their own, in which they were very bigot; and therefore he speaks in that Manner, as to move their Compassion, and to render his Petition more gracious to them. From which I would only remark, Here we may learn a *prudential Lesson*, That in dealing with *higher Powers* in Matters that do concern Religion, to represent them in such a Manner, and by such Expressions, as (while they are consistent with Truth) may be most acceptable, and least irritating to those from whom we do expect Favour or Relief; as doubtless such who have the Interest of Religion at Heart, in representing Grievances to those in *Authority*, will reckon

reckon it *Prudence* in them, as well as *Nehemiah* here, to do it in such Manner as shall be most likely to obtain the desired Effect.

So much for the Manner in which he addresses himself to the King. From the Answer itself that he gives, as it stands connected with the preceding History, we observe to you this *Doctrinal Proposition*, as the Subject of my ensuing Discourse;

DOCT. *That it is kindly like for the true Sons of Zion to be concerned for the Cause of Religion, and the City of God, when in Distress.*

'This appears so very consequential from the Words, and the Manner in which they are expressed, that every thinking Person does see its Evidence; so that I shall spend no more of your Time in shewing you how native it is, but shall go on with all possible Brevity to explain what I conceive is needful for illustrating the Doctrine, to make Way for the Improvement I design.

The Method, in which I would incline to open up the Doctrinal Part, is shortly this; 1. To enquire into the State of Religion, and Ordinances of Divine Appointment, under this Period the Text refers to. 2. To shew how the Sons of God, the Children of Zion, did evidence their Concern for the same. 3. To take Notice briefly of the Success they had in their Endeavours, And, 4. Conclude with the proper Application of this Doctrine to our Day and Circumstances.

First,

First, As to the first of these, namely, the *State of Religion* and Worship of God at this Time our Text refers to : Here a Number of Particulars might be enlarged upon, which I shall intirely pass ; nor shall I detain you with a Detail of that Misery and Affliction the poor *Jews* did undergo during the Seventy Years of *Babylonish* Captivity, while they were mocked, and their Religion exposed to the Ridicule of their Persecutors, *Psal.* cxxxvii. 2, 3. their publick Worship being made entirely to cease, and they left to sigh out their mournful Complaints by the Banks of the River of *Babylon*. All which I shall pass, because, in the Lord's Kindness and Mercy to his People, he had been mindful of his Promise, and given them Favour in the Sight of those who detained them Captives ; so that they were allowed to return again to their own Land : Tho' even in that Event, no doubt, it was afflicting to the true Sons of Zion to think that so many of the *Jews* who had Liberty to return, yet contented themselves to stay still in *Chaldea*, and other Provinces of the Empire ; and surely that they were afterward, by *Haman*, while *Esther* was Queen, brought into Trouble and Straits, was but just, in the Lord's Providence, that they should meet with sore Trials in that Country, who valued so little the Opportunity they had of returning to their own Land, and enjoying the Worship and Ordinances of the Lord there. However, this I enlarge not upon, because the Captivity was over.

Yet, notwithstanding of that Edict given by *Cyrus* for the *Jews* to return, *Ezra* i. 1, 2, &c. and Liberty by this Proclamation granted to *build*
their

their Temple, &c. a great many Things in their Circumstances could not but be afflicting to those who were truly concerned for the Interest of Religion, and the Honour of his Name among them; a few whereof I shall select from the History of that Time.

1. However, by vertue of that Proclamation *under the Countenance of Civil Authority*, they had the Foundation of another Temple laid; yet it was far from the former in its Beauty, so as those, who had seen the first Temple standing, did weep aloud when they saw the Foundation of this second Temple laid, because it was so far inferior to it in Glory, *Ezra iii. 12.* Besides the Magnificence of the Building, and Richness of all the Furniture in *Solomon's Temple*, vastly exceeding any Thing here, there are reckon'd by the *Jews* themselves these Things to be wholly wanting; (1.) The *sacred Fire* which came down from Heaven, and was always kept burning upon the Altar, and by which all the Sacrifices were burnt. (2.) The *Ark of the Covenant*, with the two Tables of the Law engraven by the Finger of God. (3.) The *Urim* and *Thummim*. (4.) The holy Oil of Consecration, with which *Aaron* and his Successors were anointed. (5.) The *Spirit of Prophecy*, instead whereof they had only what they called *Bath kol*, or a Voice from Heaven. These were the peculiar Glory of the *first Temple*, but were wanting in the *second*; so that, whatever external Liberty the *Jews* did after this enjoy, yet their Worship never did arrive to that Splendor and Glory which did obtain under the *first Temple*. This we find was Matter of great Concern

Concern to the true Sons of Zion, and those who were zealous for the Worship and Ordinances of the Lord among them, namely, that they were never like to recover their antient Glory.

2. When they began, under that Liberty and Inlargement granted them, to build this their second Temple, we read of great Opposition they met with from their Neighbours about them, *Ezra* iv. 1,--7. When *Tobiah*, *Sanballat*, and others Indwellers in *Samaria*, who were but mungrel *Jews*, and corrupt in their Worship, as it is known the *Samaritans* were, offered to join the returning Captives in building their Temple, out of no Design to do them Good, but to marr the whole Work, or at least to have their Influence in settling the *Form of Religion* and Worship, not according to the Plan laid down in God's Word, but according to their own *Mode of Worship* which they had devised. Thus, while they pretended fair, they had their own mischievous Designs underhand; but *Zerubbabel*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*; and other great and good Men, animated by a true Zeal for the Glory of God, and Purity of his Worship, would not allow these to join with them in that Work, as not being *Jews* themselves, nor having any Design, under their specious Pretences, but corrupting the Worship of God. This was a fore Trial to the poor returning *Jews*; for these People were powerful and mighty, and therefore, being frustrate of their Design in joining with the *Jews*, do now pull off the Mask, and appear their open and avowed Enemies; they weaken their Hands in building the Temple, and getting

getting the Worship and Ordinances of the Lord set up again publickly in the Land. This could not fail of being afflicting to these good People, and weigh heavy upon their Minds.

3. Their Neighbours about them, Strangers to Religion, and stated Enemies of the *Jews*, did further weaken their Hands, and hinder them in their Endeavours at Reformation of Religion, by *misrepresenting* them to those in Authority, as a People that were *factious and rebellious*; and that, if they were allowed to settle Religion among them according to their own Method and Plan, then they would revolt, and cast off Subjection to the Government. This they did, when the *Jews* first set about building the Temple, and thereby did put a Stop to the same, as we find, *Ezra* iv. 7---24. And after that the poor *Jews* had got their *Addresses* and *Memo-rials* presented to the King, and by their good Friends all these Aspersions wip'd off, so as they obtained a *new Grant*, and Law in their Favours, for going on with the Building of their Temple, and making up the Breaches in their Wall; yet we find that their Enemies do move again; and then *Sanballat* the *Horonite*, *Geshem* the *Arabian*, and *Tatnai* the *Governor*, with others their Companions, *Neh.* iv. Chapter throughout, shew their Opposition, and endeavour again to misrepresent their Case to the King of *Persia*, and thereby procured a Stop to be put to the Building. Thus, in all Periods of the Church, open Enemies, or pretended Friends, do seldom fail to stir up the *Civil Powers* against the *Kingdom of Christ*, as if it were incompatible with their worldly Power and Grandeur; all which

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flows either from Ignorance or Malice : For true Religion will always make these that know it to be the best Friends to the Government; and the Kings of this World, did they know their own Interest, would have nothing to fear from the Kingdom of Christ ; *His Kingdom not being of this World*, and who commands all his Followers to be *subject to higher Powers, and that not only out of Fear, but for Conscience-sake*, Rom. xiii. 1, 2, &c.

4. Another great Grievance they had to wrestle with at this Time was, That after the Essays that were made at first to rebuild the Temple and Walls of *Jerusalem*, and restore the City, and set up the Worship of God there, according to his own Appointment ; and this Work went on, and prospered for a While under *Zerubbabel* the Governor, *Joshuah* the high Priest, and the Prophets *Haggai* and *Zechariah* ; yet we find their Enemies were restless, and had again brought them under the *Umbrage* of the Government, and Encroachments were made upon the Privileges granted to them; so that their Enemies had made their Assaults upon *Jerusalem*, had defaced and overthrown their Building, and consequently had in a great Measure made external Ordinances and publick Worship to cease, while the poor scattered *Jews* throughout the Land durst not venture to go up to *Jerusalem* to worship the Lord there, according to his Appointment. This we find was that which in particular did weigh heavy upon the Spirit of this good Man *Nehemiah*, and was the special Cause at this Time of his being *sad and sorrowful in Countenance* ; so it is related, *Neh. i. 3.* that

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Hanani one of his Brethren came from *Jerusalem* to *Shushan* the Palace, and told him that the *Jews* were in great *Affliction* and *Reproach*, and also that the *Walls* of *Jerusalem* were broken down, and the *Gates* thereof burnt with *Fire*, and that they were in great *Distress* as to outward *Circumstances*; so that there was much of a *Famine* of the *Word* of the *Lord* among them, while they could not come up to *Jerusalem* to worship, but under great *Discouragements*, and even in *Danger* otherwise of their *Enemies*, that waited to annoy them.

5. Another *Grievance* they laboured under at this *Time*, and which had its sad *Influence* to hinder *Reformation*, and the *Interest* of *Religion* among them, was this, That a great *Number* of the *Priests*, the *Ministers* of the *Lord's House*, were not what they should have been, but a *Discredit* to *Religion*, and a dead *Weight* upon the *Hands* of those who wished well to *Jerusalem*, and the *Cause* of *Religion*, and that in these following *Respects*;

(1.) Inasmuch as many of them, under the *Babylonish Captivity*, had symbolized with the *Idolatry* of these *Nations*, or *Places* where they were detained; and had likewise drawn away many to join with them in doing *Sacrifice* to these *Idols*, or at least in pretending to worship the *Lord* according to the *Customs* of these *Nations* whither they were driven. This is plain from that fore *Threatning* by *God* himself against those *Priests* who had done so, *Ezek.* xlv. 10,--14. where the *Lord* discharges them ever to be admitted to the *Priest's Office* again to minister before him in his *Sanctuary*.

(2.) Another Thing grievous proceeding from them was, That as the Priests were all the Sons of *Aaron* by lineal Descent, and none other were allowed to minister in that Office ; so we find by what is related, *Ezra* ii. 61, 62. *Neh.* 6. 64, 65. that a great many came and offered themselves, and would have intruded into that Office ; but by the great and good Men, who had the Purity of Religion at Heart, were rejected, as not having the *Qualifications* required of such as alone could be allowed to minister in holy Things.

(3.) That was not all, but of those Priests who had returned, and had been several Years attending upon the Temple-Service, after their Return from the *Babylonish* Captivity, many of them had corrupted themselves, and had taken strange Wives, as well as others in the Land ; yea, were chief in Transgression, *Ezra* ix. 1, 2, 3, &c. and thereby had polluted themselves, and proved a Stain to their sacred Character ; yet such had been ministring at the Altar, and were now a dead Weight upon the Hands of these who had Reformation at Heart, while they themselves were deeply guilty, and were become contemptible in the Eyes of the People, and the Offering of the Lord thereby despised ; and those who should by their Station have been most forward for Reformation, were become backward to the same, as being themselves chief in the Transgression.

Now, add to all these, That they had Enemies about them, that watched over their Words and Actions, *misrepresented* them to the Government, while those that did bear Rule over them were

were *Heathens*, sunk deep into Idolatry, and stated Enemies to that Worship appointed by the True and Living God; and consequently, *Insinuations* against them were readily hearkned to, while *Addresses* in their Favours, and for the Sake of their Religion, did meet with Discountenance, and little Favour could be expected, while their Religion was abominate by the Emperor and those about him, as directly contradicting their own, to which they were so much addicted.

Under all these Discouragements, Religion did ly at this Time: And it needs not be questioned, but that these Things were grievous and weighty upon the Spirits of all the true Sons of Zion, such as *Nehemiah*, and others; and therefore no Wonder that, as in the Text, his *Countenance was sad, while Jerusalem lay in Ashes, and the Gates thereof were burnt with Fire*. Yet, notwithstanding all these Discouragements they did labour under, they did not faint or despair: The State of Religion was low, and they groined under innumerable Hardships; But yet the Cause was the Lord's, and therefore never so low, but that he can help, while *Zion's King doth live, who lives and reigns for evermore*: It is easy with him to give a merciful Reviving to his Cause and Interest; and, whatever Opposition it may meet with, yet it is the Cause that will never sink, but will prevail at length: And therefore these great and good Men were not quite discouraged, but, in a humble and sweet Dependence upon him who is Zion's King, they did shew their Concern, and use their Endeavours for a better State of Religion, and a merciful Return to their Affairs.

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Which does natively lead me to the *second* Thing proposed, namely, How did these *Jews*, the true Sons of Zion, shew their Concern for the Interest of their Religion, when it was so low, and in the melancholly Circumstances mentioned? All I have to represent on this Head, shall be summed up in these following Particulars;

1st, They *wept, mourned, and made Supplication* to him who was Zion's King. This they did in secret before the Lord, making their fervent Addresses to him who is the *Hearer of Prayer*, who could help them, and who had the *Hearts of all Men in his Hand*. This was a very proper and seasonable Mean, even to *stand in the Gap*, and plead mightily with the Lord, who is the *Hearer of Prayer*, and whose Ears are open to the Cries of his own, more especially in Behalf of his Interest: And this is what the Lord does expect of his Saints, when he is pleading a Controversy with *Jerusalem*, namely, That they should stand in the Breach or Gap before him. And with respect to this the Lord does complain, that when his Hand was stretched out, and he threatening Ruin to *Jerusalem*, that yet there was no Man to plead for her, *Ezek. xxii. 30. And I sought for a Man among them, that should make up the Hedge, and stand in the Gap before me, that I should not destroy it, but I found none; therefore I have poured out my Indignation upon them, &c.* Whereas, on the other Hand, it was acceptable to the Lord to see his Children even *taking Pleasure in the Dust of Jerusalem*. And, as this was the Way to obtain Mercy and Favour for his Heritage, so it

was

was the Method of procuring Safety to themselves, who were thus in Secret concerned before the Lord, *Ezek. ix. 4.* Thus was this good Man and others concerned in wrestling with the Lord in Behalf of his own Glory, That he would remember his former Loving-kindness, and shew them Mercy at length; as we read, *Neb. Chap. 1st*, throughout.

2dly, Further, They shewed their Concern for *Jerusalem*, and the low Estate of Religion, by their appointing, and keeping in a very religious Manner, their *publick Fasts* and *solemn Humiliations* in Behalf of the Church of God; and this joined with a very particular and special Enumeration of all the *Steps of their Backslidings*, taking Shame and Confusion of Face to themselves, and giving unto God the Glory. This again is a Mean of the Lord's own Appointment for obtaining Mercy, and averting Wrath and Judgment hanging over Persons or People; and it is in this Way that we are to expect the Lord to be merciful and gracious when his Hand is stretched out. This is what we find the Lord himself enjoining his People in Time of publick Calamity, as the Way to avert his Wrath, *Joel ii. 15, 16. Sanctify a Fast, proclaim a solemn Assembly, and let the Priests, the Lord's Ministers, stand between the Porch and the Altar: And let them say, Save thy People, O Lord, and give not over thine Inheritance, &c.* And it is in this Way that the Lord had from the Beginning told them that they might look for his Blessing upon them when they were brought into Distress, and in no other Way were they to expect it, *Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42, &c.* When they

they are brought low, and in their Enemies Hand, *If then, saith the Lord, their uncircumcised Heart be humbled, and they then accept of the Punishment of their Iniquity, and acknowledge that I have walked contrary to them, as they have walked contrary to me, &c. Then will I remember my Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will remember the Land, &c.* Agreeably hereunto, we find the Lord's People thus employed, namely, in their solemn and publick Humiliation before the Lord, with an ingenuous Acknowledgment of all the Steps of their Backsliding, and Sins of all Ranks, their Kings, their Princes, their Nobles, their Priests and People : This we find, *Ezra ix. and Dan. ix.* Chapter throughout, and particularly through the ninth Chapter of this Book of *Nehemiah*, where we read, that *Ezra* and the rest of the chief Priests stood up in the Midst of the Congregation, and made a particular Acknowledgment of all their Iniquities, *v. 34, 35. Neither have we, our Kings, our Priests, or our Fathers kept thy Law, &c.* Thus they did show the Concern of their Spirits for the State of Religion among them, by humbling themselves in the Sight of God, acknowledging their Iniquities, and all the Steps of their Backsliding, giving unto God the Glory, in ascribing Righteousness to him in all that had come upon them, and taking Shame and Confusion of Face to themselves.

3dly, To shew that they were in Earnest, and withal that they did not despair in so good a Cause, they not only wept and made Supplication, not only kept their solemn Fasts and Acknowledgment of Iniquities before him against whom

Whom they had sinned; but they joined their *Endeavours* with their Prayers and Supplications : And that,

First, By setting about Reformation in good earnest, of these Things that were wrong among them, and which were some Way in their own Power to reform. This was very seasonable and proper Duty. It is generally reckoned a little *preposterous* to apply to others for Help and Relief, while we will not do what is in our own Power to do to help to ourselves; nor is it possible to convince others that we are in earnest, while we are not willing to do what lies in our Power. Thus several Abuses were crept in among them, the Reformation of which they heartily set about. As, *1mo*, *Ezra ix. 1, 2, &c.* we find, that both Priests and Nobles, as well as the People, had corrupted themselves, and walked contrary to the Lord's Commandment in marrying strange Wives, whereby the Lord was provoked, and they led away to the corrupting the Worship of God, being insnared by those with whom they had joined Affinity. This great Wrong, as being in their own Power to help, they heartily set about the Reformation of, and it was done with all Expedition. *2do*, There was a gross Profanation of the *Sabbath-day* among them, by carrying Burdens, and making Merchandice on that Day, contrary to the Commandment; and this, as we read *Neb. 13. 15*, — *31.* was quickly rectified. *3tio*, There was grievous *Oppression* among them; the Rich did bear hard upon the Poor, and oppressed them so, as they made their Life a Burden to them; of which they make a grievous Complaint, *Neb. 5. 1, --- 14.* Of this we read like-

likewise a speedy Reformation, with a solemn Promise not to provoke so in Time to come. 4^{to}, Inasmuch as the Walls of *Jerusalem* and their Temple were laid in Rubbish, however great was the Undertaking to repair the same, yet we see they heartily set about it ; and herein they did shew more than ordinary Concern, being encouraged thereto by the Prophets *Haggai* and *Zechariah*, as we read, *Ezra* v. 1, 2, 3, &c. 5^{to}, Inasmuch as the Ordinances of the Lord's Appointment had much ceased among them, and diverse Ordinances had been wholly omitted, we find that, as People in earnest for Reformation, they do set about these Duties, and restore these Parts of *Divine Worship* according to the *Pattern shown in the Mount* ; as we find particularly recorded to their Honour, *Ezra* iii. 1.—8. They repaired the *Altar of the Lord*, and kept the *Feast of Tabernacles*, and restored the continual *Burnt-Offering* before the Lord. Thus, like People that had Reformation at Heart, they joined their Endeavours together, and set about reforming all that was in their Power.

But then, as they did labour under Difficulties from their Enemies about them, and were in no good Case themselves to build their Temple, and repair their Walls, without further Assistance ; therefore,

Secondly, As Opportunity and Occasion offered, which they sought with all Diligence, they did not fail to make Application to those in *Authority* over them for their *Countenance* and *Assistance* ; and withal, took the Occasion to clear and vindicate themselves from these *Aspersions* cast upon them by their Enemies, who did all that

that they could to hinder their Prosperity, by endeavouring to render them obnoxious to, and bring them under Umbrage with the Government: In both which Events, they did reckon it their Duty, and surely it was seasonable, to take the Opportunity of giving a true *Representation of their Grievances* to the Government, and crave their Favour and Protection; however they did differ from them in Religion, being Heathens, and gross Idolaters, yet they did crave their Favour and Countenance to the Building of their Temple, and Liberty for publick Ordinances in their own Land. This was done by *Ezra*, and here we find was done by *Nehemiah*: For, however the Lord alone was their *King*, their *Lawgiver*, and had promised to save them, *Isa. xxxiii. 21.* yet they did not reckon that this was to be done without the ordinary Use of Means, where these were to be had; and therefore they made their Application to the *Civil Magistrate*, in the most respectful Manner, for their Favour, Countenance and Protection.

Thirdly, Let us add to all these their Endeavours, when they attained to any Thing like a Reviving among them, and Matters were in any comfortable Circumstances, we see, that, like Men that are in earnest in Religion, they solemnly bind themselves to the Lord, and to one another by *Covenant*, and *mutual Engagement*, to hold Hand to one another, and to maintain the Lord's Cause, to walk in his Ways, to go on in the Work of reforming what was wrong, and to maintain what the Lord had wrought for them; of this we read *Nehem. ix. last*, and Chapter *x.* throughout. Thus these People were in

earnest, and shewed themselves to be so, in the Use of all probable and habile Means; and we find the Lord did not disappoint their Expectation: Which brings me to

The *third* Thing proposed; namely, To consider what Success the Lord did give to their Endeavours of this Nature, in granting them Favour, and restoring to them the Exercise of their Religion in a more prosperous State and Condition.

First, The Lord was pleased to pour out of his Spirit upon severals of his Servants, as a *Spirit of Prayer and Supplication*, so as their Hearts were drawn out in Prayer and Wrestling with the Lord for obtaining that Mercy from him: And this was a promising Sign, and a Token for Good, that the Lord designed to grant them the Mercy, when he stirred up his Servants to pray for it, and gave them Inlargement of Heart in so doing. When the Lord had determined to send *Judah* into Captivity, he forbade his Servants to pray for them, for he would not hear them; and this is no less than *three* Times repeated, *Jeremiah* Chap. vii. 16. Chap. xi. 14, and Chap. xiv. 11. When he designs not to grant such a Mercy or Favour, he takes, as it were, the *Key of Prayer* from his Servants: Whereas, when he designs to grant any Blessing or Mercy, he stirs them up to pray, yea, pours out upon them a *Spirit of Prayer and Supplication*, *Zech.* xii. 10. This the Lord did in the present Case; he stirred up *Daniel*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and others, as *Saviours upon their Mount Zion*, did give them a Spirit of Prayer and Wrestling, and In-

Inlargement of Heart in praying for the Good of Jerusalem.

Secondly, The Lord did put in their Hearts, and stirred up the People, to make an *ingenuous Acknowledgment of their Sins*, and the several Steps of their *Backslidings*; and these they confessed before the Lord, without extenuating their Sin, or covering their Iniquity; but took Shame and Confusion of Face to themselves, lying low in the Dust before God, against whom they had sinned. This was hopeful-like about them, and a good Sign that the Lord would have Mercy upon them, when he humbled them in his Sight for all that they had done, making an *ingenuous Acknowledgment of their Offences*, without seeking to extenuate their Guilt, *Ezek. xvi. 62, 63.* And I will establish my Covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord: That thou mayst remember, and be confounded, and never open thy Mouth any more, because of thy Shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.

Thirdly, Notwithstanding they were Captives under that great Monarch of Persia, or Assyria; yet the Lord, who hath the Hearts of all Men, even the *Kings of the Earth*, in his Hand, and can turn them whithersoever he will as the Rivers of Water, did give them Favour in the Sight of these who had Dominion over them, and turned their Hearts to grant them Relief, and the *free Exercise of their Religion* at length, with all possible Encouragement for them to go on in it. This was remarkable in their Circumstances, and an Evidence that the Lord did shew them Favour, while he did thus work for their Deliverance;

rance; so that in the Days of *Ezra* and *Nebe-
miah*, who were *Cotemporaries*, there were no
less than four several *Edicts* granted by that great
Court in Favours of the *Jews* and their Reli-
gion.

1^{mo}, The first was by *Cyrus*, mentioned *Ezra*
i. 1, 2, 3, &c. and this was the first Liberty by
Proclamation for them to return to *Jerusalem*;
and build their Temple, with a Restitution of
the Vessels of the Temple that had been carried
away.

2^{do}, The second *Edict* in their Favours was
by *Darius*; whether *Hystapis*, as more generally
reckoned, or *Darius Nothus*, as some contend,
is not our present Business to debate. But of
it we read, *Ezra* vi. 1, 2, 3, &c. containing
Warrant and *Grant* to the *Jews* to go on to
finish the Temple, and other Parts of the Work,
with all Necessaries for that End, to be sup-
plied and given out of the publick Money, or
Tresury.

3^{tio}, The third was that of *Artaxerxes*,
reckoned *Longimanus*, of which we read *Ezra*
vii. 11,--24. in Terms very ample, not only
to furnish them with what was wanting to repair
the House of God, but likewise a stated Allow-
ance for every Thing that was necessary to keep
up the Worship of God in the Temple of *Jeru-
salem*: And to his Honour it is recorded how
generously he acted, and how pious was the Tenor
of his Decree, v. 23. *Whatsoever is commanded
by the God of Heaven, let it be done for the
House of the God of Heaven.* A noble Pattern
and Example to those in Authority, to give all
Countenance and Encouragement to the Exer-
cise

of Religion, without inroaching upon, or depriving the Church of God of these Privileges he hath bought for them, and wherewith Zion's Lord and King hath made them free.

4to, The fourth and last Decree, or Edict, that we do read of in their Favours, is this *Grant* to *Nehemiah*, in the 20th Year of the same *Artaxerxes*, as the former to *Ezra* was in his 7th. We have already heard what was the Occasion of it, and we read in the following Words how generously *Nehemiah* had all his Request granted by the King, the *Queen* sitting by, who by many is reckoned to be *Esther* the *Jewess*, who yet had not revealed her Kindred or Genealogy, but to be sure would use all her Influence to grant the desired Favour for the *Jews* whose Case was not forgotten by her, however advanced to that high Power and Dignity. This *Grant* to them was very seasonable; for, notwithstanding all former *Edicts*, yet their Adversaries had bore hard upon them, and made Inroachments so far, as *Jerusalem* was much laid in Ashes, and the publick Worship attended with the greatest of Hazard and Danger. To *Nehemiah*, as we read in the following Words, is granted Power and Commission to restore all that was wanting among them. And, as we find by the History, this Reformation, Peace and Quiet ensuing thereupon, did last a considerable Time, till that *Monarchy* was swallowed up by the *Grecian*.

So that we see their honest Endeavours were crowned with Success; and, from a low and languishing State, Matters were brought to a flourishing Condition, and Religion was made again to take deep Root in their Land; many
scat-

scattered Exiles returned to *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, each one sitting under his own *Vine* and *Fig-tree*, without any to make them afraid; while the Lord was gracious to them, bringing them into his holy *Mountain*, and making them again joyful in his *House of Prayer*.

Thus I have finished what I proposed upon the *Doctrinal* Part, and shall proceed to the *Application* from this Text and Doctrine, to our present *State* and *Circumstances* in which I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible, omitting many Things that might be enlarged upon.

APPLICATION.

This Doctrine does natively lead us to inquire first into the *State of Religion* among us, and how it fares with the City of our God, at this Day? And here a very lamentable *Scene* does open: For,

1st, However we are not to despise the *Day of small Things*, as certainly it would have been wrong in any of the *Jews* to have undervalued what the Lord did for them, in bringing back their Captivity, and granting them so much of Liberty; It would have been wrong, I say, in them, to have slighted all that the Lord wrought for them, and to have despised or withdrawn from publick Ordinances, because their *second Temple* had not the Beauty and Glory of the *first*: Even so, however we have not in all Things attained to the Glory of our former *Estate*; yet we ought to bless the Lord for what he hath wrought for us in our *glorious Revolution*, after our 28 Years of *Babylonish Captivity*, wherein a very *mournful Scene* was opened in
our

our Land, and when of us it might have been said, without any Stretch of Metaphor, what the Psalmist complains of the State of the Church, *Psal. lxxiv. 5, — 10. how the Enemies did rore in the Midst of the Sanctuary — and burnt up all the Synagogues of God in the Land.* Now, as *Cyrus's* Proclamation for Liberty was unexpected, and the poor *Jews* were like Men that dreamed, *Psal. cxxvi. 1.* they could scarce at first believe it possible : Even so our happy Revolution, under that illustrious Prince, King William, was to our Land a very seasonable, merciful and surprizing Deliverance, both as to our civil and sacred Concerns, for which we have never yet been thankful, for all the Privileges that we did then, and have since enjoyed under the Countenance of *lawful Authority* ; and therefore it is just with the Lord to abridge our Privileges, while we did never value them aright, nor give to the Lord, the *Author* of them, the Praise that was due. We ought not then to despise the Day of *small Things*, but bless the Lord for what we do yet enjoy, as knowing that others would value them at a higher Rate, who are this Day deprived of them, having their *silent Sabbaths*, and a *Famine of the Word of the Lord*, while we have so much of external Peace and Tranquillity lengthned out to us, under the Countenance and Government of our *Sovereign King George*, and are encouraged to live a *Life of all Godliness and Honesty, sitting under our own Vine and Fig-tree, without the Awe or Dread of Man upon us.* These are valuable and precious Blessings, for which we ought to be thankful, improving

ving and not *despising* the *Day of small Things* among us.

Yet notwithstanding, *2dly*, They are but *Strangers in our Israel*, and have the Concerns of God's Glory little at Heart, who do not at this Time see Matters to be in such melancholly Situation among us, as affords them just Ground and Occasion of being concerned for the same, and, with *Nehemiah*, to have their *Countenance sad*; while so many Breaches are made in the Walls of our *Jerusalem*, real Religion and practical Godliness so much upon the Decline, and so many Tokens of the Lord's Wrath and Anger gone out against us, as do call us loudly to *Mourning* and *Humiliation* for them. I shall not take upon me to enumerate all the Particulars, nor engage myself and *Audience* with what may be controverted; yet I believe my *Reverend Fathers* and *Brethren*, as well as my other *Audience*, will all agree with me in the following Instances wherein I crave Leave to be your *Remembrancer* upon this Occasion.

First, It hath been of late Years a very just, but mournful Complaint, That *Atheism*, *Infidelity* and *Prophanity* have very much abounded and spread in these Lands: Many have cast off *all Fear of God*, all Regard and Respect for every Thing that is *sacred*: Our *Youth of better Fashion*, and others who pretend to be wise above their Neighbours, and talk as if *Wisdom were to die with them*, have most shamefully degenerate into the grossest of Errors, so as to cast off the very Profession of Religion. Books in Abundance of this Sort have been published to the World, wherein *Christianity* itself hath been openly

openly attacked, our *dear Redeemer*, the *Eternal Jehovah*, hath, in so far as in them lies, been robbed of his *Divine Nature*, and degraded into the Rank of a Creature; and, however their vain and malicious Attacks have met with solid and undeniable *Answers*, yet, alas! the Poison of these Books does remain, by which many among us are tainted, who are not ashamed to own, but do glory in it, and on all Occasions, and in all Companies, are venting their Atheistical Principles; by which *unwary Youth*, and Persons *unstable in Religion*, are apt to be led astray. This is for a Lamentation, an Evidence of the Lord's Anger, and for which he is pleading a Controversy with us, while such Things are openly vented, and the Poison of them is daily *infecting like a Gangrene*.

Secondly, Another melancholly Evidence of the Decay of *practical Religion* among us is this, That the *primitive Spirit of Christianity* is very much extinguished; and as our Iniquities have provoked the Lord, so the Lord in his Anger hath *divided* us, and instead of *Christian* and *Brotherly Love*, that is so much the Badge and Glory of Christianity, now a Spirit of *Jealousy* and *Animosity* does take Place, whereby we weaken, instead of strengthening, one another's Hands in Religion, and in opposing the common Enemy of *Christianity* itself. Among the Signs of approaching Ruin and Desolation on a Land or Church, that are given by our Lord and Master, this is too visible among us, *Matth. xxiv. 12. Because Iniquity abounds, the Love of many waxeth cold*. What woful Divisions and Animosities among *Ministers* and *People*, betwixt

Ministers and Ministers towards one another? And, because my Brother doth not in every Thing act and do as I do on every Occasion, must I therefore state myself his Enemy? must I tear his Reputation? must I hate his Person? must I do all that lies in my Power to ruine his Character, and render him useles in the common Cause of Religion and Christianity among us? These are such Things which we wish could have been buried in Silence; but, alas! they are too manifest, they will not hide, and are for a Lamentation, and a sad Evidence that the Lord hath a Controversy with us, and that our Iniquities have brought us low.

Thirdly, However outward Attendance be given to publick Ordinances, and Numbers do throng our Assemblies, as well as in former Days; yet Ministers have Cause to complain, as the Prophets did of old, and their Master after them, *Lord, who hath believed our Report? Christ in his Person, and in his Offices, is contemned.* Yea, alas! the Preaching of *Christ in his Person, in his Offices, and his Salvation*, both in its Purchase by his *active and passive* Obedience to the Law, and in its *Application* by the powerful Grace and Working of his *holy Spirit*, is become by too many among us, as a Subject out of Date; while our itching Ears crave somewhat that is new, and are rather pleased to have our Imaginations and Fancies tickled by *polite Phrases, and eloquent Expressions*, than to have our Hearts affected with a Sense of Sin, with the Corruption and Depravity of human Nature. Others are pleased only with *abstracted Schemes of Morality*, instead of the Preaching of Christ and the

the Gospel. I am far from condemning *Morality*; Christianity does certainly give us the best System of *moral Precepts* that ever were in the World: But it is certain, that moral Precepts, let them be preached never so much, will never prove the Mean of reforming the World, or healing the Corruption of *human Nature*. The *Heathen Philosophers* did try this Method to the utmost, but the World, by all their *Doctrine*, was not reformed; for this was not the Mean of God's Appointment for obtaining the End: *But after that in the Wisdom of God, the World with all their Wisdom knew not God, then it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.* And, what was the Subject of this Preaching by which God did save the World? It was the *Preaching of Christ*, 1 Cor. i. 21, 22, 23. But *we preach Christ crucified*, &c. Moreover, the Necessity of the *Spirit of God* his working in us all that *Change of Nature*, all that *Holiness* which the Lord doth require, and by which alone we can be fitted, either to serve him, and live to his Praise here, or be capable to enjoy him for ever; However herein doth ly the *Life* of real practical Religion, yet, alas! how is this Subject by some despised, by others laughed at, as *Enthusiasm*, or *unintelligible Jargon*? And while these Things, which are the chief Subjects of Christianity, are thus slighted and despised among us, it is impossible that real Religion can flourish or abound. Here then is Matter of *Lamentation* to every One that loves our *Lord Jesus Christ*, whether *Ministers*, or others in their private Station, That the great End of Ordinances seems to be so much lost,

lost, and Ordinances, however by many regularly waited upon, yet in few attended with Success.

Fourthly, As the Cause of this, and another Evidence of the low Estate of Religion that we have to lament at this Day, is a very sensible *Withdrawing* of the *Lord's Spirit*, the *Spirit of all Grace*, and *gracious Operations*; That *Spirit* of the Lord, who is promised to his Church, to remain in and with his Church to the End of the World, and whose Presence is that which denominates a Society, a *Church* to Christ; for Christ will never own that a *Church* of his, where he dwells not by his *Spirit*. Now, as the *Withdrawing* of his Spirit in such a Measure, is the most afflicting Evidence of the Lord's Anger against us, so it is the great Reason of all our other Wrongs; for, were there more of his Spirit and Presence among us, Religion would put on a new Face, and appear in its native Beauty. Now, that there is such a manifest and sensible *Withdrawing* of the Lord's Spirit and Presence, appears but too evident,

1st, From the little of *Conversion*, or reclaiming of poor Sinners from the Evil of their Ways, that does attend the Dispensation of Gospel-Ordinances at this Day. The Lord's faithful Servants labour and are unwearied in their Diligence in preaching the Gospel, *warning every Man*, threatening Sinners by the *Terrors of the Law*, encouraging them by the *Promises and Grace* of the Gospel, to fall in with God's Method of Grace; and yet, after all, they have it to complain, That *the Bellows are burnt, the Lead is consumed, the Founder melteth in vain*;

vain; for the Wicked are not taken away, Jer. vi. 29. When the Lord's Spirit was poured out in the Day of *Pentecost*, Acts ii. what a vast Multitude were converted by the Preaching of the Gospel! And, wherever there are the Influences of his Spirit attending the Preaching of the Gospel, then there will be the *Conversion* of many, a pulling down the Kingdom of Satan, and building up the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

2^{dly}, Another Evidence of the Withdrawing of the Spirit in a great Measure among us is, The little of the Life and Power of Religion upon the Spirits of those that are converted and called by the Grace of God; but, instead thereof, *Deadness* and *Formality* in our Worship and Approaches unto God; little of the *Savour* of Heaven and Godliness in our Conversation, little that looks like the Spirit of Christianity and the Disciples of our Lord and Master, little Concern for the Cause and Interest of Christ among the Professors of his Name, as an Evidence that there is but little of his Spirit among us: For, where the Spirit of the Lord is poured out plentifully, there Religion will appear amiable, and shine forth in the Lives and Conversation of the Sons of Zion, *Isa. xlv. 3, 4, 5. I will pour out Water upon him that is thirsty, and Floods upon the dry Ground: I will pour out my Blessing upon his Seed, and my Spirit upon his Offspring: And they shall grow up as the Grass, as Willows by the Water-Courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's: And another shall call himself by the God of Jacob, &c.* We have Reason to bless the Lord, that he hath not altogether left us, but that there are some in our Land called

led effectually by his Grace into the Kingdom of his dear Son ; and the Lord hath his *Remnant* in the several Corners of our Land : Yet, alas ! these are but *low Shrubs*, when compared with the *tall Cedars* that once grew in our *Lebanon*.

3dly, As a further Evidence of the Lord's Withdrawing the Influences of his Spirit in a great Measure from us, There is little of Wrestling, *Jacob-like*, with the Lord at this Day, or crying mightily to him, that he would yet return in Mercy to us, heal our Backslidings, and love us freely. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Life and *Liberty*, 2 Cor. iii. 17. and he is the Spirit of *Grace* and *Supplication*, Zech. xii. 10. But, alas ! at this Day there is such a Restraint of the Spirit, that the Children of Zion do not find Inlargement of Heart, nor get Liberty and Freedom in wrestling with the Lord for his gracious returning to us ; but rather the *Key* and Spirit of Prayer seems to be taken away, which is no small Evidence of the Lord's being angry with us, that his Hand is stretched out and his Anger not turned away.

4thly, There is no less a sensible Withdrawing of the Lord's Spirit and Presence from his *Courts of Judicatory* among us, which were once the Glory of our Zion ; in which there appeared great Zeal and Concern for the Cause of Christ, a Christian-like and courageous Opposition to *Encroachments*, whether upon our *Doctrine*, *Discipline*, *Worship* or *Government*. And, however we have yet Reason to bless the Lord that we have Liberty, and the Protection of *Civil Authority*, to meet together in a *judicative Capacity*, about the Affairs of God's House ; Yet, alas !
the

the Complaint hath been great and almost universal, that there is not now the Spirit among us to act for the Cause and Honour of our Lord and Master, that once was in this Land, when these Mettings were the Joy and Rejoicing of the Spirits of God's People; while now their Hearts do tremble, lest the *Ark of God* get a wrong Touch among us: And the Lord's serious Remnant complain, That their Hearts have been but little refreshed, and their Joy but little increased by any Thing that we have been honoured to do these several Years. All which is for a *Lamentation*, That the Lord hath a Controversy with us, that his Spirit is much withdrawn, while few do find Courage and *Freedom* to appear for the Sake of Jerusalem, even tho' otherwise their Hearts wish well to the same. And it may be said of us, That *the Men of Might do not find their Hands in the Day of Battle*; but *faint-hearted, Ephraim-like, they do turn back*, Psal. lxxviii. 9. and *few of all the Sons of Zion, whom she hath brought forth, have Courage to stand by her in the Day of her Distress*.

Fifthly, And the last that I shall mention upon this Head of the *State of Religion* among us, is, The many *melancholly and unhappy Settlements* of Congregations that have been of late up and down this Land, several of which have been censured by the highest Judicatory of this Church: By which Settlements, *Pastors* have been intruded upon Congregations, contrary and in Opposition to the Good-will and Choice of the Bulk of the Congregation; by which the Lord's People have been scattered like Sheep upon the Mountains without a Shepherd, and the

Ordinances of the Lord have been despised and contemned when administered by such Persons, as could find in their Consciences to *thrust* themselves in upon, or take the Charge of the Souls of these People who did reclaim against them. Were any Congregation refusing to call a Gospel-Minister at all, in that Case there may be good Reason why, as it is said in our *Books of Discipline*, the Church should send them One in the *Fear of the Lord*: But, where a People are most willing and desirous to be settled with such as their Pastor, against whom there can be no Objection, and of whose Piety and Gifts they have had Knowledge; to hinder them in this, and thrust violently one in among them, whom either they do not know, or from the Knowledge that they have of him are not satisfied, but reclaim against him; sure I am, every thinking Person will easily conclude, that this cannot possibly have a Tendency to the Success of Religion, or the Edification of Souls in that Place: And so these poor People are turned out, as it were, from the *Lord's Heritage*, and made to wander seeking Ordinances elsewhere; and then, being properly under the Inspection of none, Ignorance must soon prevail among the Bulk of them; while others are driven into *Extremes*, even ready to leave our Church altogether; while they do not think that we do shew towards them a Christian Sympathy and Concern in their distressed Circumstances.

Now, in all that I have advanced upon this Head, I would fain persuade myself, that all my *worthy Fathers and Brethren*, as well as other *Hearers*, do heartily concur. These are
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the Things which we all lament, and I hope are Matter of deep Concern to us at this Day. And this shall suffice as a Hint at the *State of Religion* among us at present, and the first Branch of Improvement from the Text and Doctrine.

2dly, Is it so, that it is kindly-like, it is like the Children of God, and true Sons of Zion, to have the Concerns thereof upon their Spirit, and to be grieved when Jerusalem is in Distress? Then this Doctrine does reach *Reproof*,

First, To such among us as are at Ease in Zion, Amos vi. 1,—6. and are not grieved for the Afflictions of Joseph; who content themselves when they can enjoy their Ease and outward Conveniencies in the World, but care not whether the Interest of Christ do sink or swim in this Land; yea, will never further imbarque in that Cause, than as it stands with their Profit and Advantage. This (however, alas! too universal among us) is that Frame and Temper of Spirit, as argues these Persons to have no Religion at all, to be mere *Time-servers*, whose Conscience can always allow them to go with the Stream, but never to appear for the Cause of Christ, but as their Profit and Advantage leads them to it. Surely such Persons are not the *Sons of Zion*, but do justly fall under that heavy Charge which Christ exhibites against the Church of *Laodicea*, Rev. iii. 16. *Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my Mouth.*

Secondly, Is it so, that it is kindly-like, and like the Children of God, to be concerned for the State of Religion, and the City of God

when in Distress? Then surely this does reach yet a heavier *Reproof* to these that are the *Troublers of our Israel*; who, like *Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, Gessem the Arabian*, and the rest of their Companions, do all that they can to hinder the Building of our Jerusalem, and repairing the Breaches thereof; yea, have an active Hand in widening our Breaches every Day. Now, whether such are pretended Friends, or open Enemies, they expose themselves to the heavy Indignation of him who is Zion's King, and who is jealous for his Cause and Interest: For, however he may, for holy and wise Reasons, bring his People and Church into Trouble, yet he is angry with such as *help forward the Indignation*, and will not fail to recompense to them their due Reward, making them to know that *no Weapon formed against his Interest shall prosper*. Let the Combination of Men be what it will, yet the Lord sits in Zion, and laughs at their Projects. He hath *builded Zion on that Foundation, against which the Gates of Hell shall not prevail*. But, as for these who will needs shew their impotent Malice against his Cause and Interest, the Words are awful, and the Caution alarming, *Zech. xii. 3. In that Day I will make Jerusalem a burdensom Stone to all that meddle with her; all that burden themselves with her shall be cut to Pieces, tho' all the Men of the Earth were joined against it.*

Thirdly, The third and last Use I shall make of this Doctrine is by way of *Exhortation* to all my Hearers, *Ministers*, or others of whatever *Rank or Station*; That every one of us in our different

different Spheres would shew ourselves more and more to be the true Sons of Zion, by being heartily and kindly concerned for the same, now when the State of Religion is so low among us. I would fain perswade myself, that my *Reverend* and worthy *Audience* are such, as I shall not need to make Use of many *Motives* to inforce the Duty; It carries so much of Evidence and Reason in itself, that I believe every serious and attentive Hearer hath been all along convinced of it. And, as we shewed through the whole, how the Sons of Zion did evidence their hearty Concern for the Cause thereof; so it no less becomes us to imitate them so far as the State of Religion among them and us doth correspond. I shall therefore but drop a few Things upon this Head by way of Motive, which I desire first to speak home to my own Soul.

First, It is but natural and kindly-like, That, as we own ourselves Children of the Family, we should have the Concerns of our Heavenly Father, and dear Redeemer much at Heart. *The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up*, saith *David*; which was verified in a higher Sense in him who was the true Son of *David*; and, in their Measure, is a beautiful and lovely Part of the Character of all the Children of the Family. And, as the Apostle reasons, *Heb. xii. 8.* That to *be without Chastisement* is not the Character of *Children*, but of *Bastards*; so I am sure the Force of the Argument will be no less strong, that to be indifferent and unconcerned about the Cause of Christ and his Kingdom among us, will evidence that we are but *Bastards*, and not *Children*; that we have in us but the Temper of

of Servants and *Hirelings*, but nothing of the Spirit of the Sons of the Family.

2dly, The Lord expects no less from us. If he hath done so much for us, for which we can never recompense him again, the least we should do is, in our different Stations, to shew a Concern upon our Spirits, how to live to his Praise, and how to shew our Gratitude to him for all that he hath done for us, and for all the Mercies that we stand possessed of, and for all that we have in the large Offer of the everlasting Gospel. Hath the Lord been pleased to send his Gospel, and erect his Kingdom of Grace among us, while he hath not done so to other Nations? Yea, hath he called any of us by his Grace into the Kingdom of his dear Son? Hath he given to any of us the Earnest of his Spirit, and sealed us up to the Kingdom of Glory? Surely it is not possible that we can have the Faith and Hope of these Things upon our Spirits, and not be concerned how to shew our Love and Gratitude to him that hath loved us so dearly. And, however much any of us may stand indebted to our Fellow-creatures for good Offices done, or whatever we may expect from others; yet we are unworthy of the Name of Christians, unworthy the Character of *Ministers of the Gospel*, if we be not more, and reckon not ourselves more, yea, infinitely more indebted to Christ, than we are to all the World besides. Our Lord and Redeemer then does justly expect it of us, yea, the World will expect it of us, that we answer our *Character*, and shew how much we reckon ourselves indebted to him, by having upon our Spirits, and evidencing in our Practice, how much
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the Concerns of Zion, and Interest of our Lord do ly at Heart with us.

3dly, It is not only expected of us as the Return of Gratitude, but we are called to it in Point of plain *commanded Duty*. The Truths of God which he reveals among us, and what he does work for his Church, in all the Ages and Periods thereof, are a *Trust* committed to these who live in these several Ages, a *Trust* which they are to keep safely, and hand down carefully to the next Generation. This they owe in Duty to God; this they owe as Duty to the Generation that is to come, that they may hear and know all the mighty Works of God, and what he has done in former Ages, and praise him for these his mighty Deeds. *O Timothy* (says *Paul* to the Evangelist) *keep the Trust committed to thee*, 1 Tim. vi. 20. And, as the Lord did reveal and manifest his Statutes and Judgments to *Israel*, while he did not so to every Nation; so every Age and Generation of that Church were obliged to be faithful to that Trust, and to maintain what the Lord had wrought for them, and to hand it down to the next Generation, *Psal.* lxxviii. 2, 3, 4, 5, &c.—*Which we have heard from our Fathers, we will not hide from our Children, &c.—For he hath established a Law and Statute among us, and charged us to tell our Children, &c.* Our Forefathers were concerned for the Truths of God in an evil Day, and loved not their Lives to the Death, in contending for the Truths of God, that they might hand them down to us their Posterity; and, what Pity will it be, yea, how aggravated must be our Guilt, if in this Generation we be not careful as they

they were, or suffer a Testimony for Truth to fall in our Streets? Let us then shew our Concern this Way; *Let us walk about our Zion, Psal. xlviii. 12, 13. and go round about her; let us tell her Towers, and count her Bulwarks, and consider her Palaces, that we may tell them to the Generation following.* This is our Duty, as we will be answerable to him, before whom we must give up our Accounts, and by whose Sentence our State must be finally determined.

4thly, Let us encourage ourselves in appearing for the Lord, in shewing our Concern for his Interest, because the Cause is *honourable* to imbarck in. However it may be run down by a profane World, and Generation of Men that have no Concern for Religion upon their Spirits; Yet it is the Cause of Truth, and of him who is the God of Truth: And more honourable it is to contend for his Cause, and the *Royalties* of his Crown and Kingdom, than to be the Favourite of the great Ones of the Earth, or to sway a Sceptre over an universal Monarchy. Our Lord, as Head of his Church, is *King of Kings*, and *Lord of the Kings of the Earth*; and all his Servants are made-Kings and Priests to God and his Father, and they shall reign with him for evermore: And, as it is honourable to serve such a Master, so it is the Glory of Christians, if called to it, to contend for his Cause. The Apostles, *Acts v. 40.* did glory in it, *That they were reckoned worthy to suffer Shame for his Name.*

5thly, As it is honourable, so it will be found our greatest Interest, to imbarck in his Cause. Those that do serve our Lord, do wait upon a liberal Master, who, as he furnishes them for
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Work and Employment, so he will bear them out in contending for his Cause, and shewing their Regard for his Interest ; yea, he will bear them honourably through, so that none of them shall be Losers at his Hand, or at the Foot of the Account, *Mark x. 29, 30. There is no Man that hath left Houses, or Brethren, or Wife, or Children, or Land, for my Sake and the Gospel's ; but shall receive his hundred Fold in this Life, and in the World to come Life everlasting.*

6thly, It is encouraging to shew our Concern this Way, to appear in our Station for the Cause of Religion ; because, however low it may be brought, yet it is the Cause that will never sink. Zion was brought low, while *Jerusalem* was laid in Ashes, their Temple destroyed, and publick Ordinances made to cease : Yet, while *Zion's* King did live, who lives for evermore, there were still glad Tidings to be published to the Daughters of *Jerusalem* ; even, *That saith to Zion, Thy God doth reign, Isa. lii. 6.* Our glorious Redeemer, the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*, who alone was found worthy to open the Book of Providence, and to read thereon, *Rev. v. 4, 5.* He knows all the Times and Periods that are to pass over his Church to the End of the World, and knows what Difficulties and Calamities his Servants are to undergo for his Cause and Interest : Yet, when it is lowest with his Heritage, he is not only able, but will, as King of *Zion*, appear, *commanding Deliverance for his Israel.* Religion then may be run down, the Cause of Christ may be despised, and his Servants persecuted ; yet he who sits on High, and who hath established *Zion*, will not always suffer the Rod of

of the Wicked to ly upon the Back of the Righteous. It is the Cause that will never sink, and therefore let us neither be afraid nor ashamed to own the same, and shew our Concern about it.

7thly, Lastly, However none of us may know when it is fit for the Lord to send Deliverance to his Church, and cause the *Walls of our Jerusalem* again to be built; however the Lord may be justly provoked, and in Honour concerned, to bring a Stroke upon the Land, to shew how much he detests the *Indifferency* and *Neutrality* of this Age, the many Sins and Defections we are guilty of, the little Concern among us for his Glory: However, I say, the Lord may see fit to bring his Church into Distress, and send Calamity upon this Land and Nation for our Contempt and Misimprovement of the Gospel; Yet still there is Encouragement to be found on the Side of Truth, and to shew our Concern for the Cause of Christ: For even then will he distinguish these, and shew his Regard for them, that are the *Mourners in Zion*, and whose Hearts are bleeding for the Cause of Religion. *Ezek. ix. 3. The Lord sets a Mark upon the Forehead of such who are mourning for all the Evils done in the Midst of Jerusalem*, and the Destruction shall not come near them.

I would fain perswade myself, that such is the Concern of my Hearers, in this Regard, that I have said rather more than enough by way of *Motive* to perswade to the Duty, and shew its Reasonableness; namely, That every one of us should in our Station shew ourselves concerned for the Cause of Christ, and Interest of Religion among us, when it is so low.

I should now come to shut up this Discourse with a few *Directions* how we are to evidence our Concern this Way. Upon which Head, I own myself very unfit to give *Advice* and *Direction*; my younger Years, and Want of Experience, make me blush to adventure upon a Subject of this Nature, especially considering before whom I speak, my *Reverend Fathers and Brethren*, at whose Feet it would become me to sit, and hear this Subject discoursed to better Purpose. I should therefore have intirely dropt this Part of my Discourse, were it not that I would fain flatter myself that it will not be reckoned *Arrogance* or *Presumption* in me, or be in the least misconstrued, when I shall only glance at a few Things I find here practised by these great and good Men who lived in that afflicting Period of the Church my Text refers to, and who were approved of God in the Measures that they took: And without doubt these are left upon Record, as all other Parts of Scripture are, for our *Direction* and *Instruction* in like Cases, and in such Circumstances; And my *learned* and *worthy* Audience will be better able to judge how far these are proper and seasonable at this Day. Allow me then, just again to remind you, how *Nehemiah* and other good Men did shew their Concern in their Situation; and, in applying these to our Circumstances, I shall have done.

First, As God is the God of Order, and hath in his holy and wise Providence raised up different *Ranks* and Stations of Men in the World; so he will have every one to act in their own Sphere, and suitable to their Station: And, according to the Talents they are intrusted with, every

one in their Station are to serve and glorify God, as otherwise, so in shewing their Concern for his Cause and Interest. As in this remarkable Event of bringing back his People from *Babylon*, in building his Temple, in repairing the Breaches of *Jerusalem*, and in every Thing that had a Tendency to the Good and Welfare of this People, both in their *civil* and *sacred* Concerns ; *Ezra*, *Joshuah* the high Priest, *Zerubbabel*, and *Nehemiah* appointed Governor, every one here acted that Part incumbent on them in their Station, and therein they were owned of God in the same : Even so, as every one of us are called in our Station to act for the Honour of God and the Good of our Neighbours, for the Cause of Christ and the advancing of Religion ; so let every one of us act our Part according to our Station, as we expect to be approved of God therein. Let no Man then say, I am not a *Magistrate*, I am not a *Minister*, nor do I act in a *publick Station*, and therefore herein I am not concerned, nor can I interest myself : For to every one of us the Lord hath intrusted our Talents, to some ten, to others five, to some but one or two ; yet it is our Duty, as we will give up our Accounts to our Lord and Master, that each of us should, according to our Station, lay out these Talents, whether few or moe ; and in serving the Lord with these Talents, according to our Opportunities, herein we are to expect his Approbation. The poorest of these People who returned from *Babylon*, and lent their helping Hand in building the Temple and in repairing the Breaches of *Jerusalem*, these who did what they were able

able with a *willing Heart*, were equally accepted and commended of the Lord, *Nehem. iv. 6.* as these who acted in a higher Station, while they did no more but according to the Opportunities and Talents which God gave them. In like Manner, let every one of us in our Stations, *Magistrates, Ministers, Elders and private Christians*, every one of us as God has placed us on the Stage of Life, act our Part thereon, and according to our Abilities and Opportunities shew our Concern for the Interest of Religion. And therefore,

Secondly, Let every one of us look into our own Hearts, consider our Ways, and see how far we have sinned, and added to the Provocation; for it is because of the *Iniquity of Sons and Daughters*, that the Lord is wroth with his Heritage: And if the Lord do give us a right Concern upon our Spirits for the melancholly Situation of Affairs among us, without all Question the best will find, that our Iniquities among the rest have added to the Causes of his Wrath, and the Controversy the Lord is pleading. When *Isaiab* did see the Lord in his Glory, he cried out, *Wo's me, for I am undone; for I not only dwell among a People of unclean Lips, but am a Man of unclean Lips.* And when the Lord promised a merciful Return to *Israel and Judah*, As he pours out on them a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, *Zech. xii. 10, 11.* upon this there is not only a general Mourning, but every Family apart, and their Wives apart. In all general Defections and Backslidings of a Church and People, without Controversy there is some Set of Men who have

a chief and *active* Hand in the same ; as there is this Day among us a general Complaint against this and the other Sett of Persons, that they are deeply guilty in all that hath befallen us, whose Conduct and Management I shall be far from vindicating : But this is most certain, that however this or the other Person or *Sett of Men* may be guilty this Way, yet it is true on the other Hand, that we are never truly humbled, nor are we ripe for Deliverance, till we be made every one of us to mourn for our *own Iniquity*, and the Iniquity of the Land. It was the Complaint of the Lord by *Jeremiah* in a backsliding Day, when he was about to bring upon them the heavy Stroke that ensued, That no Man returned to the Lord, in saying, *What have I done?* Every one was ready enough to blame his Neighbour, saying, Such and such Persons are guilty, and have brought on us the Lord's Wrath and Indignation ; yet no Man said, *What have I done?* but put it away from himself, *Jer. viii. 6.* and this was an Evidence that they were not duly humbled or affected with the Causes of the Lord's Wrath and Anger gone out against them. Let every one of us then in particular look into our own Hearts, search our Ways, the Sins of our private and publick Stations ; and here every one of us will find Ground of *Mourning and Humiliation* before the Lord.

Thirdly, As every one of us will be found guilty in particular, and have *our own Sins* to mourn over, as these Sons of Zion did at this Time ; so the whole Land was guilty of sundry *National and publick Steps of Defection* : And therefore we find, that *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and other good Men, with the Body of the People, did

did assemble together for *publick Fasting, Mourning and Humiliation*, with an Acknowledgment of their Iniquities, and the several Steps of their Backsliding; and herein they acted an ingenuous, open, and candid Part before the Lord; as we find in the History of these Fasts, *Ezra and Neh. ix.* Chapters throughout. There we find they take Shame and Confusion of Face to themselves, and give unto God the Glory, in acknowledging the Sins of their *Kings, Princes, Nobles, Priests, and all Ranks of Persons*; owning the Lord to be righteous in all that he had brought upon them, because that they had sinned, and procured all that at his Hand. And as the Lord had promised, *Lev. xxvi. 40, 41.* that in this Way they were to expect his looking favourably on them; so the Lord did own these publick Acknowledgments of Sin, their Fasting and Humiliation, so remarkably, as to remove their Difficulties, and give them satisfying Evidences that he was well pleased with them, and did accept of that Piece of Service off their Hands.

Sure then this is a proper *Direction and Pattern* for us in like Cases; and, while we labour under Difficulties great and manifold as well as they, let us herein imitate them, as we would expect the Lord to bless us as he did them. Sure we have at this Day as great Reason for *Fasting, Humiliation, and Acknowledging of our Iniquities* before the Lord, as we have had these many Years in our Land; and yet 'tis a Duty that we are living in the shameful Neglect of: We shew ourselves very backward to any Thing of this Nature, as if there were nothing wrong among us, or had no Sins to confess and acknowledge

ledge before the Lord : And surely Backwardness herein is no very good Sign among us, but rather an Evidence that we are far from being a convinced or humbled People, and such as are ripe for Deliverance: And yet here surely is our Duty, had we more of Heart for it ; even in a most publick and ingenuous Manner to acknowledge before the Lord the several Steps of our Backsliding, the Sins of our Land, and of all Ranks living therein. Here is abundant Matter for Confession of Sin, and Humiliation before the Lord ; and it would be more thriving-like with us, had we more of Heart and Disposition thereto ; and in acknowledging of our Iniquities to join therewith fervent Prayer and Supplication to him who is the Hearer of Prayer, and Zion's King, That he would look upon our Affliction, and grant a Reviving of Religion among us ; as we find these good Men here did cry unto him, and he shewed himself ready to hear, and did grant them an Answer of Peace. This sure is no less becoming Duty on our Part, *Isa. lxii. 6, 7. Ye that make Mention of the Name of the Lord, keep not Silence, give him no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth,* and until he pour out his Spirit from on high : *Then shall we grow up as the Grass, as Willows by the Water-Courses,* *Isaiah xlv. 3, 4, 5.*

Fourthly, As we have Opportunity and Access, let us, like these good Men, shew our Concern for Zion, in making Application to the *higher Powers*, for the *Redress* of these Things that are grievous to us, and wherein they are in Capacity to grant us Relief. We see here what

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Nehemiah did, and we see it was not in vain : The Lord, who hath the Hearts of all Men in his Hand, did turn the Heart of this, and other the Emperors, to favour Zion, and grant Redress of Grievances that the Church and People of God did ly under. And sure here our Encouragement is vastly greater than was theirs, while we have so *gracious* a Sovereign as *King George* upon our Throne : That *Illustrious Family* have shown on all proper Occasions their Good-will and Favour to this poor Church, have shown themselves ready to hear our *Grievances*, and grant *Redress* of the same ; and shall we complain of Grievances we labour under, and yet never take the proper Measures this Way for a Redress of them ? Our Church hath formerly done so, and it hath not been altogether in vain, even when we had not *that* Countenance of the *Legislature* that now we have. It might therefore be thought a very proper Method for these who, in their Stations, Ministers and others, who are called more particularly to mind these Things, to do what in us lies that proper Application be made this Way, and, like good *Nehemiah* here, to watch the proper Opportunity, and to do it in the Manner that may be least irritating, and most conducive to answer the End of the same. Why should we be discouraged this Way, while we have such Access to the *Legislature*, and have these in *lawful Authority* so favourable to us on all Occasions ? But then,

Fifthly, Let not all our Concern ly here, in seeking Help from others ; let us mean Time, every one of us in our Station, while we address

those in Authority, join our own Endeavours for helping forward so good a Work; and that, *1st*, Let every one of us, in our Stations, and according to our Capacities, be setting about *personal Reformation* of what is wrong in ourselves, and every one of us setting to our helping Hand for carrying on a *publick Reformation* among us. When this good Man *Nehemiah* came to *Jerusalem*, he found the whole City demolished; they wanted not their Enemies who withstood its being rebuilt, and these People you may easily suppose in no good Circumstances for setting about, and perfecting so great and expensive a Work; and yet we see the Way how it prospered, and was finished, *Nehem. iii. Chap.* throughout; every Man built and repaired, as it were, before his own Door, and the Work was perfected with incredible Speed. Just so in our Case; there are many Wrongs among us, and yet, were every one in particular setting about *personal Reformation* of what we are guilty of, and every one of us this Way lending our helping Hand, *Magistrates, Ministers, Elders* and *private Christians* in their Station, how soon would Religion revive, and our *Jerusalem* yet become a pleasant Habitation?

2dly, As every one of us in private, and in particular, are called to set about Reformation; so the good and great Men here did join their *publick Endeavours* for rectifying what was wrong among them: Yea we find, *Nehem. ix. and x. Chap.* they did solemnly enter into *Covenant*, and engaged, as to the Lord, so to stand by one another, in carrying on Reformation of what was wrong among them. Just so, in the
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Beginning of our *Reformation from Popery*, and afterwards when our Lands were overrun with *Prelacy*, our Forefathers did solemnly in like Manner engage to be the *Lords*, and to stand by one another in promoting Religion, and a Reformation of what was wrong among us; and their Endeavours were followed with Success. When we in these Lands shall be in Case to act over again the same Part, the Lord only knows: We seem at this Day to be in little Condition for such a Work; yet let us, in our Stations, strengthen one another's Hands in promoting the Good and Welfare of our Jerusalem. And as, upon the former Head, we did reckon it Duty to make Application in the proper Way to those in Authority, to grant Relief and Redress of these Things wherein it was in their Power to help us; so here we reckon it no less Duty, that we should plead with our *Mother-Church* for Redress of what is in her Power to help this Way. And seeing it is on all Hands, and by the Church herself in her publick Acts and Deeds, acknowledged, that *Patronages* are to us a very great *Grievance*, and do open a Door for manifold Encroachments upon this poor Church; let us make our *Addresses* to these who can give us Ease of this Burden, as has been done in former Periods, upon which some Ease hath been granted by the *Sovereign*, however not so well affected to our *Church* and *Constitution* as our present Sovereign *King George* is.

So it is equally manifest, that our late *Rule for planting vacant Churches*, &c. however at present it should have the Authority of an Act of our General Assembly, yet it is obvious, that it

doth not answer the End and Design of *curing our Divisions*, but rather *increasing* them ; as is evident by *Representations* and *Instructions* from all Corners of this Church, that it is far from tending to promote the great End and Design of the Gospel. And, seeing our Church disclaims all *Infallibility* in her *Decisions*, and when any Thing is laid down as a *Rule*, that is found by Experience not to answer the End, but rather on the contrary to hinder the Success of the Gospel, and Peace of the Church, it is her Duty, yea, and Glory, to *rectify* the same ; and it is no Want of *dutiful Respect* to the Authority of our highest Judicatories, to plead with them for rectifying what is found to be wrong : Let us then in our Stations plead, and never be ashamed to plead, in the most earnest Manner, with our *Mother-Church* for a Redress of that which is in her Power to grant, and thereby to take away that which hath been already, and is likely still to be, more and more a *Bone of Contention*, and Occasion of Strife among us.

3dly, Let us who are called to labour in the Work of the Ministry in this *Province*, and every one of us in our Stations, do what in us lies to promote the Good, Welfare, and Peace of Jerusalem among ourselves ; and particularly, in discouraging and hindring all such *unhappy Settlements*, as tend to rend asunder, and scatter the Flock of Christ, instead of edifying and building up the same. This *Reverend Synod* hath formerly shown a just Zeal and Concern upon their Spirits against *Presentations*, and *Accepters of the same*: And, at our last Meeting, this Synod was

was honoured to give a *faithful* and *seasonable* Warning, shewing their Dislike of such Practices, their Inconsistency with our Principles, declaring our Resolution to discountenance all such within our Bounds. I should reckon myself justly liable to *Censure*, if I should make the least Supposition, but that we will shew, by our Practice, that we were sincere, and in good Earnest, in what we have done. Let us not be ashamed of the same, but continue our hearty and sincere Endeavours this Way, as what is proper and incumbent on us in our Capacities; and it is in this Way that we are to expect the Lord to bless us.

But, being sensible I have incroached very much upon your Time and Patience, I shall conclude with one Remark, begging Pardon for having insisted so long.

4thly, *Lastly*, As this People here laboured under great Difficulties, and had many cunning and powerful Enemies to oppose them in all their Endeavours; so we find that which helped them in the Whole, was their *Unity* among themselves, and joining all their Endeavours together to carry on the great Design. No Question but Persons might have their different Sentiments, not only as to the Way and Manner, but even as to some Things that were proper to be done; yet we find this occasion'd no publick Breach among them, while they all aimed at the same Thing; however one might reckon one Method, and another might reckon a different more proper. Just so, as we would expect that any Thing should prosper in our Hands, let us plead for much of the *Spirit of Unity*, for much of the Spirit

Spirit of Love, Brotherly-kindness and Charity among us : Alas ! here is our Ruin, our woful and unchristian *Mistakes* of one another, both among Ministers and People. Let us then cry to the Lord for, and let us endeavour and cultivate among ourselves, Christian Love, Brotherly-kindness, and mutual Forbearance; That while we may suppose Persons aiming at the same End, the Honour of our Lord, and Advancement of Religion, let us not tear and devour one another, because I may think one Method more proper, and my Brother may be of a different Sentiment from me. This is far from the Spirit and Temper that Christ recommended to his Disciples, *Mark ix. 38, 39, 40.* when they told him that they had seen One casting out Devils in his Name; and *that they had forbidden him, because that he followed not them:* But what says our Lord and Master? *Forbid him not : For no Man that works a Miracle in my Name will speak lightly of me ; and he that is not against us, is for us.* If my Brother be sincerely aiming at the advancing of Religion, and the gaining Souls to Christ, it will be very hard to discourage such, however in some Things they may differ from us. We have at this Time open and avowed Enemies to contend with, and such who are waiting for our Halting, whose Spirits are rejoicing at our Divisions, and are saying, *Aha, so we would have it :* It is against such we should all join our Endeavours; and this we can only do, when we are *One* among ourselves, and are exercising daily Christian and Brotherly-Love one towards another, while we are aiming at the same End, *Phil. iii.*

16. It is only in the higher House, and in a *State of Perfection*, that we shall intirely be of the same Mind in all Things; it is there that we shall arrive, or come to the *Unity of the Faith*, Eph. iv. 13. It is there that we shall have no mistaken Notions of God, of Religion, or of one another; and therefore it is very Christian-like that we should be *bearing with one another* by the Way, and, while we are travelling out the Road, living together like those engaged in the same Work, and serving the same Master, till we come to the *General Assembly of the First-born above, and Spirits of just Men made perfect*. It is here by *Peace, Unity and Concord* that we will strengthen one another's Hands, and in this we are to expect that the Lord's Work will prosper among us.

Now, To him who is able to lead and guide us into all Truth; To him who holds the Stars in his Right-hand; To him who is Zion's King, who rules in Jacob, and to the Ends of the Earth gloriously; To him who brings Light out of Darkness, and Order out of Confusion; To the only Wise and True God, be Glory, Honour, Praise and Dominion for evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.

